IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A method of preparing a palatability enhancer for an animal food, comprising the steps of:

(a) creating a liquefied mixture comprising triglyceride molecules derived from at least one plant or animal source, mixed with at least one [[non-cellular]] donor [[compound]] which functions as a [[an efficient]] donor of [[an]] elements selected from the group consisting of sulfur, [[and]] nitrogen, and a combination of sulfur and nitrogen; and,

(b) cooking the liquefied mixture under a suitable combination of temperature, pressure, and time conditions to cause: (i) breakage of a substantial quantity of the triglyceride molecules, thereby creating smaller molecular fragments; and (ii) chemical bonding of sulfur or nitrogen atoms to the smaller molecular fragments, in quantities sufficient to form a cooked product for use as a palatability enhancer for at least one type of animal food preparation.

2. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein at least some of the triglyceride molecules are derived from a plant source selected from the group consisting of corn, olives, peanuts, safflower oil, palm oil, rapeseed oil, soybean oil, cottonseed oil, coconut oil, and canola oil.

3. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein at least some of the triglyceride molecules are derived from an animal source selected from the group consisting of beef fat, port fat, poultry fat, and fish oil.

4. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one donor is a non-cellular donor compound [[is]] capable of donating sulfur atoms to hydrocarbon molecules and is selected from the group consisting of sulfide salts, sulfide liquors, elemental sulfur, amino acids that contain sulfur, short peptides that contain sulfur, and manufacturing byproducts that contain at least about 1% sulfur by weight.

5. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one donor is a non-cellular donor compound [[is]] capable of donating nitrogen atoms to hydrocarbon molecules and is selected from the group consisting of amino acids, nucleotides urea, other molecules that contain amine groups, molecules that contain amide groups, molecules that contain guanidine groups, heterocyclic compounds that can readily release and donate nitrogen atoms under cooking conditions, and chemical manufacturing byproducts that contain at least about 5% nitrogen by weight.

6. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the liquefied mixture is cooked at a temperature in excess of about 110°C, in a vessel capable of sustaining elevated pressures during cooking.

7. (Original) A palatability enhancer for an animal food, comprising a cooked product created by the method of Claim 1.

8. (Original) A palatability enhancer for an animal food, comprising a mixture of (a) a first palatability enhancer ingredient, created by the method of Claim 1, and (b) at least one second palatability enhancer ingredient.

9. (Original) A palatability enhancer of Claim 8, wherein at least one second palatability enhancer ingredient is prepared by hydrolytic fermentation of at least one type of cohesive animal tissue.

10. (Original) An animal food product, comprising a dry or semi-dry animal food prepared by a method selected from the group consisting of pelleting, extruding, or molding, and which has on at least some of its surfaces a cooked product created by the method of Claim 1.

Claims 11 – 13 (canceled)

14. (Currently amended) The method of Claim [[11]] 1, wherein the donor is microbial cells that are selected from the group consisting of yeast, bacteria, and other microbes which contain at least about 10% nitrogen as a portion of their dry weight.

15. (Currently amended) The method of Claim [[11]] 14, wherein the microbial cells were previously used in a manufacturing operation involving sulfur.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently amended) A palatability enhancer for an animal food, comprising a cooked product created by the method of Claim [[11]] 4.

18. (Currently amended) A palatability enhancer for an animal food, comprising a mixture of (a) a first palatability enhancer ingredient, created by the method of Claim [[11]] 4, and (b) at least one second palatability enhancer ingredient.

19. (Original) A palatability enhancer of Claim 18, wherein at least one second palatability enhancer ingredient is prepared by hydrolytic fermentation of at least one type of cohesive animal tissue.

20. (Currently amended) An animal food product, comprising a dry or semi-dry animal food prepared by a method selected from the group consisting of pelleting, extruding, or molding, and which has on at least some of its surfaces a cooked product created by the method of Claim [[11]] 4.

21. (Currently amended) A palatability enhancer for an animal food, comprising a cooked product prepared by steps which include:

(a) creating a liquefied mixture comprising triglyceride molecules derived from at least one plant or animal source, mixed with at least one [[non-cellular]] donor []compound]] which functions as an efficient donor of an element selected from the group consisting of sulfur and nitrogen; and,

(b) cooking the liquefied mixture under a suitable combination of temperature, pressure, and time conditions to cause: (i) breakage of a substantial quantity of the triglyceride molecules, thereby creating smaller molecular fragments; and (ii) chemical bonding of sulfur or nitrogen atoms to the smaller molecular fragments in quantities sufficient to form a cooked product which is effective as a palatability enhancer for at least one type of animal food preparation,

wherein the cooked product is created in a sufficient volume for a commercial manufacturing operation, and is subsequently coated onto or added to at least one type of animal food.

22. (Original) A palatability enhancer for an animal food, comprising a mixture of (a) the cooked product of Claim 22, and (b) at least one second palatability enhancer ingredient.

23. (Original) An animal food product, comprising a dry or semi-dry animal food prepared by a method selected from the group consisting of pelleting, extruding, or molding, and which has on at least some of its surfaces the palatability enhancer of Claim 21.